

# CLEO changing the color of law

Minority students  
trained in legal field.

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The scales of justice can only truly be balanced if the legal field itself is balanced. It's a premise that forms the foundation of the Indiana CLEO program — an initiative focused on training college students of color to become attorneys.

The Indiana Conference on Legal Education Opportunity, part of a national effort, turns 10 years old in June. Since its inception, a total of 270 students have successfully graduated from its summer training institute to earn law degrees.

Only 9.7 percent of all lawyers are minorities, a figure significantly lower than other white-collar professions, according to a 2005 study by the American Bar Association.

At a boot camp of sorts, CLEO fel-



**Files:** Said the program gave her confidence



**R. Sanchez:**  
Credits summer job to CLEO

lows undergo six weeks of intensive legal training, consisting of instruction on understanding and drafting contracts, legal writing and research, and some emphasis on criminal law. Upon graduation, CLEO fellows must enroll in one of Indiana's four law schools. Fellows usually receive some financial support to prepare for the bar exam — typically from former CLEO fellows.



**M. Sanchez:** Does appellate and litigation work

“(CLEO) helps prepare you and really gets your confidence together. It’s a wonderful program,” said 38-year-old Fort Wayne native Carmen Files, who decided to pursue a career in law later in life — only three years ago.

Most important, say some fellows, are the networking opportunities that prove invaluable in landing jobs after law school.

A number of CLEO fellows, like Files, are the first in their families to go to college. She heard about CLEO after attending a minority law program at the Indiana University School of Law at Indianapolis.

Initially worried her age would be a disadvantage, she says CLEO gave her the confidence she needed

## **Minority representation in white-collar jobs**

Lawyers: 9.7 percent

College and university researchers: 18.2 percent

Accountants and auditors: 20.8 percent

Physicians: 24.6 percent

*Source: the American Bar Association's study, "Miles to Go: Progress of Minorities in the Legal Profession." The research was based on 2000 U.S. Census figures.*

to succeed in law school. With previous work experience in sales and an MBA already on her resume, she will graduate in May and take the bar exam in July. Files plans to return to Fort Wayne in August for a position at Baker & Daniels.

Randall T. Shepard, chief justice of the Indiana Supreme Court and creator of the program, mentions CLEO every year in his State of the Judiciary Address, said David Remondini, counsel to Justice Shepard.

“The chief justice looked around and noticed there weren’t enough faces of color” of attorneys in his courtroom, said Remondini. “When he travels, he’s frequently asked about CLEO.” Shepard also has received calls from people in Ohio, New York, Kentucky and Georgia

who are interested in expanding the program to their states.

After graduating from the IU School of Law at Bloomington, Rafael Sanchez clerked for Indiana Tax Court Judge Thomas G. Fisher in summer 2000, a job he directly credited to CLEO.

He and his wife, Marisol, both 1999 CLEO fellows, are attorneys practicing in Indianapolis. Rafael Sanchez works in litigation and corporate law at Bingham McHale; Marisol Sanchez, an employee at Bose, McKinney & Evans, does ap-

pellate and litigation work.

Both are Puerto Rican and earned undergraduate degrees in their native country. They're also the first attorneys in their families. Sanchez said he and his wife, who came to Fort Wayne with no transportation, no family and only a determination to become lawyers, continue to support the CLEO program by serving as mentors and giving legal advice to current fellows.

"I still have great friends from my CLEO class," he said. "It's kind of like a fraternity."

## **Indiana Conference on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO)**

◆ Each year, one of the state's four law schools — Valparaiso University, University of Notre Dame, Indiana University School of Law at Indianapolis or Indiana University School of Law at Bloomington — hosts the CLEO Summer Institute.

◆ Thirty applicants are selected for the program annually.

◆ For more info.: Visit [www.in.gov/judiciary/cleo/](http://www.in.gov/judiciary/cleo/), or call 1-317-232-2542 or 1-800-452-9963.